UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

(Only for nonprovisional applications under 37 C.F.R. § 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No.	246/214
First Inventor or Application Identifier	Alexander D. Schapira
Title	METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR SIMULATION OF DIGITAL/ANALOG INTERFACES WITH ANALOG TRI-STATE IOPUTS
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APPLICATION ELEMENTS
See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

1. ☐ * Fee Transmittal Form (e.g., PTO/SB/17)
(Submit an original and a duplicate for fee processing)

2. ☑ Specification [Total Pages 34]
(preferred arrangement set forth below)
- Descriptive title of the Invention
- Cross References to Related Applications
- Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D
- Reference to Microfiche Appendix
- Background of the invention
- Brief Summary of the Invention
- Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed)
- Detailed Description
- Claim(s)
- Abstract of the Disclosure

3. ☑ Drawings(s) (35 U.S.C. 113) [Total Sheets 4]

4. ☐ Oath or Declaration [Total Pages _____]
a. ☐ Newly executed (original or copy)
b. ☐ Copy from a prior application (37 C.F.R. § 1.63(d))
i. ☐ DELETION OF INVENTORS
Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).

NOTE FOR ITEMS 1 & 13: IN ORDER TO BE ENTITLED TO PAY SMALL ENTITY FEES, A SMALL ENTITY STATEMENT IS REQUIRED (37 C.F.R. § 1.27), EXCEPT IF ONE FILED IN A PRIOR APPLICATION IS RELIED UPON (37 C.F.R. § 1.28)

ADDRESS TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents
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Washington, DC 20231

5. ☐ Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)

6. ☐ Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission (if applicable, all necessary)
a. ☐ Computer Readable Copy
b. ☐ Paper Copy (identical to computer copy)
c. ☐ Statement verifying identity of above copies

ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

7. ☐ Assignment Papers (cover sheet & document(s))
8. ☐ 37 C.F.R. §3.73(b) Statement   ☐ Power of Attorney (when there is an assignment)
9. ☐ English Translation Document (if applicable)
10. ☐ Information Disclosure Statement (IDS/PTO-1449)
☐ Copies of IDS Citations
11. ☐ Preliminary Amendment
12. ☑ Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503)
13. ☐ Small Entity Statement(s) (PTO/SB/09-12)
☐ Statement filed in prior application, status still proper and desired.
14. ☐ Certified copy of Priority Document(s) (if foreign priority is claimed)
15. ☐ Other: _____

16. If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box, and supply the requisite information below and in a preliminary amendment:
☐ Continuation   ☐ Divisional   ☐ Continuation-in-part (CIP)   of prior application No.: ____/____
Prior application information: Examiner _____   Group/Art Unit _____
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17. CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

☑ *Customer Number or Bar Code Label*

22249
PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

LYON & LYON LLP
Suite 4700
633 West Fifth Street
Los Angeles, California 90071
(213) 489-1600

Name (Print/Type)	Eric G. King	Reg. No. (Attorney/Agent)	42,736
Signature		Date	August 28, 2000

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S P E C I F I C A T I O N

FOR

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR

5   **SIMULATION OF DIGITAL/ANALOG INTERFACES**

WITH ANALOG TRI-STATE IOPUTS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

10   The field of the present invention relates to systems and

methods useful for simulation of electrical circuits, and, more

particularly, to systems and methods for simulating the

operation of systems of mixed analog and digital electrical

circuits.

15

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Simulating the electrical operating characteristics of an

electrical circuit design has proven useful in the development

of electrical systems and products. Design issues identified by

20   circuit simulation can be corrected prior to the production of

actual working prototypes (e.g., breadboard or integrated

circuit (IC) implementations), greatly reducing redesign cycle time and costs and, thereby, leading to shortened product development cycles.

Electrical circuit simulation is typically a computation-intensive task, generally requiring the use of a computer having significant processing power and memory resources. To simulate an electrical circuit design, the design is logically constituted in computer memory from stored circuit data according to programmed instructions. Behavioral characteristics of the simulated design are the result of, among other things, the components used in the design, the arrangement of their interconnections, their operating characteristics, and their logic state specifications. A designer evaluates the operation of the electrical circuit design by observing its characteristic response in simulation. The simulated response is obtained by observing signal or waveform characteristics present at particular nodes of the circuit (e.g., test points) or at particular points in the simulation program (e.g. simulation test points or breakpoints). A simulator is said to "solve" for a particular portion of a simulated circuit, also referred to as a circuit block, by calculating the output signal characteristics produced by that circuit block in response to one or more particular input signals.

The design of electrical systems that include both analog
and digital circuits or circuit blocks, known as mixed
analog/digital systems, is particularly complex. A designer of
this class of electrical systems is confronted not only by the
5   design issues present for analog and digital systems
individually, but is also faced with issues that arise from the
inclusion of both analog and digital circuits in the same
system. Mixed analog/digital system design issues are
especially prevalent when the mixed design is to be implemented
10 using a single component such as a single IC device (for
example, electromagnetic coupling of high frequency switching
transients from digital devices to analog circuitry).

In digital logic simulation, logic signals can take the
values of 0, 1, X, and Z. The meanings of 0 and 1 comport with
15 the standard definition of a Boolean value (i.e., a binary
digit). However, a signal can also take the value "X" if the
logic is such that the signal state is unknown or immaterial to
the logic specification; i.e., the signal value is either 0 or
1, but the simulator cannot determine which state is present.

20 The value "Z," however, does not represent a state of
either 0 or 1. The value "Z" is not a signal value *per se*;
rather, "Z" represents the state of a signal not being driven or
floating. When not actively driving a signal, an electronic

device, such as a logic gate or other digital circuit, may

present a high-impedance state, or "Z" state, at its output.

This high-impedance state is useful for electrically isolating

the digital circuit from the effects of other electrical signals

5   connected to its output when that circuit or device is not

driving a signal. The truth table logic specification for a

digital gate frequently includes entries corresponding to values

of "X" and "Z" as well as 0 and 1.

Difficulty may be experienced, however, in attempting to

10   simulate the effect of a Z-value output on a network node and

the circuit components or blocks relying upon the network node

as a potential input. Because a Z-value represents high

impedance or effective isolation of the digital circuit block

that normally acts as a driver of the signal at the node, the

15   node signal characteristics may remain undefined. This causes a

problem for circuit components or blocks that rely upon the node

as an input, and may lead to inaccurate simulation results.

Accordingly, it would be advantageous to provide a

simulation system and method which is capable of handling Z-

20   value outputs which connect to other circuit components or

blocks, particularly in the context of mixed digital and analog

circuit designs.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed in certain aspects to systems and methods for simulating the electrical operation of a mixed analog/digital system. In an embodiment, a simulator is provided having the capability for a simulated analog circuit block to produce the analog signal value present at the input of the analog circuit block in an actual circuit implementation for the condition in which digital gate outputs connected to the analog circuit block input are in a high-impedance state. This capability allows a mixed analog/digital simulator to simulate a wide variety of mixed analog/digital designs.

A simulator according to this embodiment may be programmed to transform an analog input of one or more analog circuit blocks of an electrical design being simulated into an analog tri-statable "ioput." The ioput generally comprises, for simulator purposes, an input signal line and an output signal line connected to the same node of the analog circuit block. The output signal line of the ioput is capable of driving an analog signal when the digital gate outputs connected to the analog block input are presented during a simulation in a high-impedance Z state. Otherwise, the output signal line has no effect.

In certain embodiments, when an analog circuit block (of a simulated design) receives a tri-state (i.e., Z-value) on one of its inputs, the simulator enables the analog circuit block to solve for the signal produced at the input by the analog circuit

5 block as if that signal were an output of the analog circuit block instead of an input. This output signal value of the analog block is propagated to the other fanouts attached to the analog block input. An input to an analog block thereby becomes an output when not being driven by a digital gate output, but

10 remains an input otherwise.

Further embodiments, variations, modifications, and advantages of the present invention are also disclosed herein.

15 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 depicts a preferred embodiment of a mixed analog/digital simulator according to a preferred embodiment;

Figure 2 is a schematic diagram of a simulated circuit in which a digital signal output is driving analog and digital

20 blocks;

Figure 3 is a schematic diagram of a simulated circuit having a bus element electrically coupling multiple digital outputs to a single network node;

and

Figure 4 is a schematic diagram of a simulated circuit

having a bus element electrically coupling multiple digital

outputs to a single network node connected to an analog block

5   and digital gates.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Systems and methods are disclosed for simulation of digital

10   and analog circuit blocks which form part of a computer file

representing an electronic circuit design, as may be generated

using electronic design automation (EDA) software tools.

By way of general background, integrated circuit (IC, or

chip) designers often use electronic design automation (EDA)

15   software tools to assist in the design process, and to allow

simulation of a chip design prior to prototyping or production.

Chip design using EDA software tools generally involves an

iterative process whereby the chip design is gradually

perfected. Typically, the chip designer builds up a circuit by

20   inputting information at a computer workstation generally having

high quality graphics capability so as to display portions of

the circuit design as needed. A top-down design methodology is

commonly employed using hardware description languages (HDLs),

such as Verilog® or VHDL, for example, by which the designer

creates an integrated circuit by hierarchically defining

functional components of the circuit, and then decomposing each

component into smaller and smaller components.

5   For example, the software-based Accelerated Transistor-

level Simulator™ (ATS™) product, commercially available from

Cadence Design Systems, Inc. of San Jose, California, provides

transistor-level circuit simulation of high-complexity

integrated circuit designs, including mixed analog and digital

10   designs. ATS™ runs on general purpose computers such as those

provided by Sun Microsystems, Inc. and Hewlett-Packard, Inc.

running the Solaris™ and HP-UX™ operating systems, respectively.

The various components of an integrated circuit are

initially defined by their functional operations and relevant

15   inputs and outputs. The designer may also provide basic

organizational information about the placement of components in

the circuit. During these design states, the designer generally

structures the circuit using considerable hierarchical

information, and has typically provided substantial regularity

20   in the design.

From the HDL or other high level description, the actual

logic cell implementation is typically determined by logic

synthesis, which converts the functional description of the

circuit into a specific circuit implementation. The logic cells

are then "placed" (i.e., given specific coordinate locations in

the circuit layout) and "routed" (i.e., wired or connected

together according to the designer's circuit definitions). The

5   placement and routing software routines generally accept as

their input a flattened netlist that has been generated by the

logic synthesis process.

In particular, the ATS™ product accepts design file formats

according to the Simulation Program with Integrated Circuit

10   Emphasis (SPICE) industry standard format, or the Spectre™

format developed by Cadence Design Systems, Inc. Both of these

formats provide a user or circuit designer with the ability to

specify device-level (i.e., transistor-level) circuit designs.

Further explanation of a particular chip design process is

15   set forth, for example, in U.S. Patent 5,838,583, hereby

incorporated by reference as if set forth fully herein.

In particular, a mixed analog/digital simulator according

to the general principles discussed above is useful for allowing

designers of mixed analog and digital systems, including

20   integrated circuit designs, to model, test, and observe the

electrical operating characteristics of a mixed system without

having to construct an actual physical prototype of the system.

A detailed description of a simulation system suitable for use

with an embodiment of the present invention is contained in

United States Patent No. 5,812,431, also assigned to Cadence

Design Systems, Inc., the common assignee of the present

invention, the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated

5   by reference into this specification. Further details

concerning the translation of user-specified behavioral

descriptions for simulation and circuit modeling techniques for

simulation are provided in United States Patents No. 5,634,115

and 5,335,191, respectively, each of which is also assigned to

10   Cadence Design Systems, Inc., the common assignee of the present

invention, the entire disclosures of which are hereby

incorporated by reference into this specification.

Figure 1 depicts a preferred embodiment of a mixed

analog/digital simulator 100 according to one embodiment as

15   disclosed herein. In Figure 1, simulator 100 includes a

simulation processor 101 and a storage device 102. Simulation

processor 101 includes a computer processing element, memory,

operating system, simulation application program, network

interface 103, and standard peripherals including a monitor,

20   keyboard, and mouse. Simulation processor 101 interfaces with

storage device 102 for the exchange of stored programs and data,

such data including information pertaining to one or more mixed

analog/digital designs for simulation. In a preferred

embodiment, simulation processor 101 is a workstation computer

platform such as is commercially available from Sun

Microsystems, Inc. or Hewlett Packard, Inc. and storage device

102 is a hard disk or other memory device connected to and

5   compatible with simulation processor 101.

In operation, the mixed analog/digital simulator 100

performs a simulation of an electronic circuit design that may

have both digital and analog components. Simulation of

interfaces between digital circuit blocks and interfaces between

10 analog circuit blocks is carried out in a conventional manner.

For an analog circuit block connected to the output of a digital

circuit block, the mixed analog/digital simulator 100 obtains

the response of the analog circuit block to a digital input

signal (i.e., 0 or 1) by performing a conventional digital-to-

15 analog conversion of the digital input signal and then applying

the resulting analog voltage to the corresponding input of the

analog block. For unknown (i.e., "X") digital inputs, the

simulator 100 performs a similar digital-to-analog conversion

for the X input according to user-specified rules for converting

20 the X input, according to techniques known in the art.

The simulator 100 further includes the capability for

analog circuit block inputs to accommodate digital signal Z

states. Simulator 100 is thereby able to accurately simulate a

wide variety of mixed analog/digital designs that otherwise
might not be subject to effective simulation.

   In the design and operation of electrical circuits, logic Z
states arise in several ways. For example, a tri-statable

5 digital logic gate can output a Z value. Furthermore, a user-
specified driver, vector, or wave can output a Z value. In each
of these cases, the network node (or "net") at which the Z value
is presented may fan out to an analog block, and to other
digital blocks as well.

10   Figure 2 is an example of such a circuit 200 in which a
digital signal output is driving both analog circuit blocks and
digital circuit blocks. Circuit 200 includes a digital gate 201
(which may be part of a larger digital circuit block) having an
output at a node 202 connected as an input to both an analog

15 circuit block 203 and another logic gate 204 (which also may be
part of a larger digital circuit block). In operation of the
circuit 200 depicted in Figure 2, when digital gate 201 drives
any non-Z value onto network node 202, every fanout of net 202
including analog circuit block 203 connected to net 202 (analog

20 block 203 in this example includes, among other things,
components R1/R2 and transistor devices M1/M2) receive this non-
Z value as an input. However, when digital gate 201 is not
driving an output signal of 0, 1, or X, digital gate 201

presents a Z value (i.e., floating) output onto net 202. In

this case, the circuit designer intends for analog circuit block

203 to determine the voltage or signal present at net 202. In

this example, the analog circuit block 203 determines the

5   voltage or signal present at net 202 by virtue of the resistor

components R1/R2 and transmission gate M1/M2 (if in the "ON"

state). The other fanouts of net 202, such as digital logic

gate 204, will receive the voltage determined by analog block

203 instead of the Z value presented by gate 201.

10   In order to provide fidelity with the design being

simulated, simulator 100 processes Z-valued inputs to analog

blocks as follows: When an analog circuit block receives a Z

value (i.e., floating value) on an input (i.e., the input is not

being driven), simulator 100 enables the analog circuit block to

15 solve for that node as if it were an output of the analog

circuit block. Since this output of the analog block is now the

only signal being driven on the network node (i.e., net) to

which it is connected, the analog circuit block can propagate

its solution to the other fanouts (i.e., device or circuit

20 inputs) of the net. In this manner, an input to an analog block

becomes an output when not being driven, but remains an input

otherwise. The connection of the analog circuit block to a

network node at which the analog circuit block normally receives

an input but sometimes drives an output (when the node is

otherwise floating) is referred to herein as an analog tri-state

"ioput."

A simulator 100 according to the embodiment described with

5   respect to Figure 2 allows analog circuit block 203 to affect

the signal present at net 202 as would occur in the actual

circuit implementation, instead of providing a Z value (i.e.,

floating value) at net 202 as presented by the output of digital

gate 201.

10   In a preferred embodiment, simulator 100 includes a group

of programmable instructions that allow a user of simulator 100

to specify the operating parameters of a simulated electrical

circuit. In addition to outputs of tri-statable gates, Z states

can arise in a simulated electrical circuit in a variety of

15   ways. For example, in an embodiment, Z states can be specified

to occur at a particular net 202 of a simulated design using the

following exemplary commands: "Connect vector," "set waveform,"

and "efsig driver." Outputs of digital logic gates and other

digital drivers discussed below are assumed to be infinitely

20   strong, zero impedance drivers when they are outputting any non-

Z value.

In a preferred embodiment, the "connect vector" command

provided by simulator 100 operates in conjunction with a T_Quote

vector driver. The T_Quote vector driver permits a vector file

stored using storage device 102 to command simulator 100 to

either drive a digital value (i.e., 0 or 1) onto net 202, or to

sense a digital value from net 202. When driving, the T_Quote

5   vector specifies hard values 0 or 1. When sensing, the T_Quote

vector specifies soft values L (low) when expecting to sense 0,

and H (high) when expecting to sense 1. When sensing, the

T_Quote vector actually drives a Z state onto net 202, and

senses the value determined from the digital circuit block

10 excluding its own Z driven output. In this case analog circuit

block 203 on net 202 determine the value present at net 202. An

example "connect vector" command for simulator 100 using a

T_Quote driver (written in a language compatible with the ATS™

software simulation product commercially available from Cadence

15 Design Systems, Inc. of San Jose, California) is:

set vector file=io.vec tagname=t_quote period=4000.0

connect vector name=t_quote signal=el direction=both col=1

20 In the above example, the "set vector" intermediate command is

used to indicate to T_Quote driver ("tagname=t_quote") that the

file containing the desired T_Quote vector is file "io.vec"

("file=io.vec"). Next, the "connect vector" command instructs

simulator 100 to apply a value as specified by T_Quote driver

(per file "io.vec") to the signal designated "e1" in the

simulated circuit ("signal=e1"). In this example, the "connect

vector" command instructs simulator 100 to provide a bi-

5   directional signal at net 202 ("direction=both"). Each element

of the T_Quote vector file is applied for the duration specified

in the "set vector" command, nominally expressed in microseconds

("period=4000.0").

An example of an "io.vec" file for use with the above

10   "connect vector" command is:

```
* vector file ;
T'0'
T'0'
T'L'
T'1'
```

For the above example "io.vec" file, simulator 100 applies

20   a value as specified in file "io.vec" to the signal designated

"e1" in such a way that simulator 100 can both drive and sense

signal "e1." In this particular example, simulator 100 drives

"0" for two clock periods, then senses the signal expecting a

"0" (L) for one clock period, and then drives a "1."

25   In a preferred embodiment, the "set waveform" command

provided by simulator 100 allows a user to specify the

occurrence of a Z state as well as "0" and "1" values for a

particular signal of a simulated design. In a preferred

embodiment, the "set waveform" command causes simulator 100 to

apply a value of "1" in response to a set waveform instruction

specifying the letter "u" (up), and to apply "0" in response to

5   the letter "d" (down). The "Z" state is specified by the letter

"z."

An example "set waveform" command (again represented in an

ATS™ compatible language) for simulator 100 is:

10   set waveform name=3 definition = (z10 >(u60 z60 d60 z60))

apply waveform name=3 signal=IN

The above example commands specify a waveform "3" ("name=3") to

be applied by simulator 100 ("apply waveform name=3") to signal

15   "IN" of a simulated design ("signal=IN"), the waveform beginning

in the Z state for 10 time units and then repeating a 1-Z-0-Z

pattern for 60 units each.

In a preferred embodiment, the "efsig driver" command

provided by simulator 100 also allows a user to specify digital

20   values for a signal in a simulated design, including Z state

values. An example "efsig driver" command for simulator 100 is:

connect driver name=input_sig func=Efsig powerup=Efsig_pup

    sig=IN

The above example "efsig driver" command specifies a set of

5   values to be applied by simulator 100 to a signal of a simulated

design ("sig=IN"), the set of values provided as a sequential

series of instructions occurring in a file "input_sig."

An example of an "input_sig" file for use with the above

"efsig driver" command is:

10

    % SIG 1

    0 SIG 0

    10 SIG 1

    20 SIG z

15   30 SIG 0

    40 SIG 1

    50 SIG u

    60 SIG 0

    70 SIG z

For the above example "input_sig" file, simulator 100 applies a

value, including Z, as specified in file "input_sig" to the

signal designated "IN" in the indicated sequence.

In a preferred embodiment, simulator 100 provides an analog

5   tri-state "ioput" as follows. Simulator 100 determines a

condition in which a design to be simulated contains one or more

analog circuit blocks (such as analog circuit block 203) that

can potentially drive a value back onto one of its inputs. If

such a condition exists, as in the case of Figure 2, simulator

10   100 transforms that input of analog circuit block 203 into an

input-output pair, called an "ioput" pair. When the input

signal to analog block 203 is a non-Z value, the ioput pair acts

as a pure input, and the output portion of the ioput presents

the value Z to isolate analog circuit block 203 from affecting

15   other fanouts of the input signal. Simulator 100 then solves the

associated values for analog circuit block 203 using the value

of the non-Z input signal.

When the input signal to analog circuit block 203 is a Z

value, however, then such an input to analog circuit block 203

20   is not being driven by another device or circuit (such as

digital gate 201). In this case, simulator 100 solves for the

analog circuit block 203 absent the input to analog block 203

and propagates the analog block solution (i.e., signal value) to other fanouts of net 202 using the output portion of the analog ioput. Each of the other fanouts of net 202 will thereby see the value driven by the analog ioput rather than the value of

5   the Z state. In this manner, the voltage or signal present at the analog ioput affects the rest of the circuit only when it is not otherwise driven.

It is commonplace in digital designs to connect several tri-statable outputs together. In general, only one of these

10 connected outputs will be driving (i.e., outputting a non-Z value) at any given time, the other outputs being in their high-impedance state (i.e., outputting a Z value). In the event that more than one digital driver is driving, and the driven values are not the same non-Z values, then a bus contention condition

15 arises. When bus contention occurs, simulator 100 generally attempts to resolve the contending multiple digital values and propagate the final resolved value to the fanouts of the multi-sourced net 202. These fanouts may include the drivers themselves (if they are biputs rather than pure outputs) which

20 expect to see the digital contribution of all of the other drivers excluding themselves.

In a preferred embodiment, simulator 100 provides a special bus element that provides a bus resolution function. Figure 3

depicts an embodiment of a digital bus element 217 as may be

provided by simulator 100 for purposes of illustrating bus

contention. Bus contention as described above can occur on bus

317 between the output of digital gate 301 and the output of

5   digital gate 311. The outputs of digital gates 301 and 311 are

connected in common to the inputs of digital gates 313 and 315

by bus 317. In the case of bus contention, simulator 100

resolves the contending signals into a single signal solution

and propagates the resolved solution to the inputs of digital

10   gates 313 and 315 using bus 317.

Figure 4 depicts an analog/digital bus element 417 provided

by simulator 100 in the context of a circuit design 400

including an analog circuit block 403 connected to bus element

417. Referring now to Figure 4, when one of the fanouts of a

15   driven digital net 402 is an analog block 403 which can

potentially also be a driver of net 402, simulator 100

preferably provides the analog input in the form of an analog

tri-statable ioput 450. Ioput 450 drives a non-Z value using an

output portion 452 only if all of the other digital drivers

20   (e.g., outputs of digital gates 401 and 411) are in their high

impedance state (i.e., are driving a Z value). If one or more

digital drivers (e.g., outputs of digital gates 401 and 411) are

driving a non-Z signal, then ioput 450 receives the output (or

resolved) non-Z signal using an input portion 451.

In the case in which ioput 450 is driving a non-Z value

using an output portion 452, bus 417 propagates the analog value

5   received from analog tri-state ioput 450 to its fanout gates 413

and 415. Each digital fanout gate (e.g., 413 and 415) inputs

will receive the digital logic value of the ioput output 452,

and any analog inputs will receive the proper analog value of

the ioput 450. For example, if fanout gate 415 were an analog

10 block, it would receive the voltage solved for on net B' (output

portion 452) rather than a digital value.

In a preferred embodiment, simulator 100 processes changes

in state for the signals of a design being simulated by

evaluating, or solving for, the signal states present at various

15 points in the design over discrete units of time. Each such

discrete unit of time may be referred to as a "time tick."

Referring once again to Figure 4, when a digital signal

changes from a non-Z value to Z, analog circuit block 403

receives the effect of the newly-presented Z signal after one

20 time tick due to rollback. Rollback describes a situation in

which an assumed future signal value solved for by simulator

100, such as the value for an analog circuit block 403, must be

reevaluated when an input to the circuit or circuit block

changes. The new signal value is determined in the time tick

following the time tick in which the new input value is

presented. Rollback occurs in response to any digital signal

making a state transition. Simulator 100 will then solve for

5   the circuit block using the new input state and post a new event

after one time-tick.

Thus when analog circuit block 403 is presented with a Z

value at its input, simulator 100 solves for analog block 403 as

if no current is flowing though that (undriven) input. The new

10   solved value is posted to the ioput output portion 452 and

propagated to the other fanout groups 413 and 415 using bus 417.

Downstream fanout groups 413 and 415 will be subsequently

reevaluated with the new input value presented by output portion

452 of ioput 450.

15   In a preferred embodiment, simulator 100 provides a circuit

partitioning capability in which, for example, a user can

specify that inputs within certain circuit blocks are not to

have their inputs transformed into ioputs 250. Simulator 100

treats such specified blocks as having "pure" inputs and

20   outputs. Inputs to such groups can, however, become fanouts of

other analog tri-state ioputs 250. In a preferred embodiment,

each such partitioned group is solved for separately by

simulator 100.

Thus, a method and apparatus for simulating mixed

analog/digital systems has been shown that transforms the input

of an analog circuit block into an analog tri-statable ioput

capable of driving an analog signal when the digital gate

5   outputs connected to the analog block input are presented in a

high-impedance Z state.

While the above description contains many specific details

of the preferred embodiments of the present invention, these

should not be construed as limitations on the scope of the

10 invention, but rather are presented in the way of

exemplification. Other variations are possible. Accordingly,

the scope of the present invention should be determined not by

the embodiments illustrated above, but by the appended claims

and their legal equivalents.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

5 1.   A circuit design simulator, comprising:

a stored electronic representation of a circuit design, said circuit design including at least one interface between a digital circuit and an analog circuit, said interface comprising a node at which said digital circuit provides an output and at

10 which said analog circuit receives an input and provides a conditional output, said output taking on any one of several states including a digital high state, digital low state, or a high impedance state; and

at least one processor for simulating operation of said

15 circuit design, said at least one processor dynamically determining whether or not to apply each conditional output to its respective node according to the state of the digital circuit output connected to the node.

20   2.   The circuit design simulator of claim 1, wherein said at least one processor applies a conditional output to its respective node when the digital circuit output connected to the

node is not in said high impedance state, and otherwise does not

apply said conditional output to its respective node.

3.   A   method   for   simulating   electronic   activity   at   a

digital/analog   interface   in   a   circuit   design,   said   method

comprising the steps of:

identifying an interface between a digital circuit and an

analog circuit, said interface comprising a node at which said

digital   circuit   provides   an   output   and   at   which   said   analog

circuit   receives   an   input,   said   output   taking   on   any   one   of

several   states   including   a   digital   high   state,   digital   low

state, or a high impedance state;

modeling   said   output   as   a   digital   output   signal   from   said

digital   circuit   to   said   node   when   said   output   is   not   in   said

high   impedance   state,   and   as   an   analog   output   signal   from   said

analog   circuit   to   said   node   when   said   output   is   in   said   high

impedance state; and

dynamically   switching   between   said   digital   output   signal

and   said   analog   output   signal   based   upon   whether   or   not   said

output is in said high impedance state.

4.   The   method   of   claim   3,   wherein   attributes   of   said

analog   output   signal   are   solved   for   while   assuming   that   no

current flows from said digital circuit to said node when said output is in said high impedance state.

5.   A method for simulating electronic activity at a digital/analog interface in a circuit design, said method comprising the steps of:

identifying an interface between one or more digital circuits and an analog circuit, said interface comprising a node at which each of said one or more digital circuits provides an output and at which said analog circuit receives an input, each said output taking on any one of several states including a digital high state, digital low state, or a high impedance state;

modeling each said output as a digital output signal from the corresponding digital circuit to said node when the output is not in said high impedance state, and as an analog output signal from said analog circuit to said node when each said output is in said high impedance state; and

dynamically switching between said digital output signal and said analog output signal based upon whether or not each of said outputs is in said high impedance state.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein attributes of said analog output signal are solved for while assuming that no current flows from said one or more digital circuits to said node when each of said outputs is in said high impedance state.

5

7. The method of claim 5, wherein each said output from said one or more digital circuits are connected to a bus contention element, said method further comprising the step of collectively resolving each said output from said one or more digital circuits into a single output signal, said single output signal taking on any one of several states including said digital high state, said digital low state, or said high impedance state.

8. A method for simulating electrical operation at a digital/analog interface in a circuit design, said method comprising the steps of:

identifying an interface between a digital circuit and an analog circuit, said interface comprising a node at which said digital circuit either outputs a digital signal or else presents a high impedance output so as to be effectively isolated from the node, and at which said analog circuit receives an input signal at an input port;

adding a conditional output signal from the input port of said analog circuit to said node; and

simulating electrical operation at said interface by applying said conditional output signal to said node when said

5   digital circuit presents a high impedance output, and applying said digital signal to said node otherwise.

9.   A computer-readable medium on which is embodied a set of programmed instructions that cause one or more processors to

10   perform a sequence of steps, said steps comprising:

identifying an interface between one or more digital circuits and an analog circuit, said interface comprising a node at which each of said one or more digital circuits provides an output and at which said analog circuit receives an input, each

15   said output taking on any one of several states including a digital high state, digital low state, or a high impedance state; and

modeling each said output as a digital output signal from the corresponding digital circuit to said node when the output

20   is not in said high impedance state, and as an analog output signal from said analog circuit to said node when each said output is in said high impedance state.

10. The computer-readable medium of claim 9, wherein said programming instructions further cause said one or more processors to perform the step of dynamically switching between said digital output signal and said analog output signal based

5   upon whether or not each of said outputs is in said high impedance state.

11. The computer-readable medium of claim 10, wherein said programming instructions further cause said one or more

10   processors to solve for attributes of said analog output signal while assuming that no current flows from said one or more digital circuits to said node when each of said outputs is in said high impedance state.

15   12. The computer-readable medium of claim 10, wherein each said output from said one or more digital circuits are connected to a bus contention element, said programming instructions causing said one or more processors to further perform the step of collectively resolving each said output from said one or more

20   digital circuits into a single output signal, said single output signal taking on any one of several states including said digital high state, said digital low state, or said high impedance state.

13. A method for simulating a circuit design, comprising the steps of:

identifying interfaces between one or more digital circuit

5   outputs and an analog circuit input, wherein each of said one or more digital circuit outputs can present a high impedance state;

modeling one or more of said interfaces by adding an output from an analog circuit receiving said analog circuit input to the interface; and

10 simulating electrical operation at each modeled interface by resolving an electrical state of the interface using only the output from the analog circuit when all of the one or more digital circuit outputs are in a high impedance state, and resolving the electrical state of the interface using the one or

15 more digital circuit outputs otherwise.

14. A mixed analog/digital simulator comprising:

a simulation processor; and

said simulation processor including a computer-readable

20 medium on which is embodied a set of programmed instructions that cause said simulation processor to simulate the operation of a design circuit, wherein said design circuit includes:

(1) a digital circuit, said digital circuit having an output;

(2) a network electrically coupled to said output of said digital circuit, said network formed by electrically

5   coupling an input of each of a plurality of circuit blocks at a network input node;

(3) said circuit blocks including at least one analog circuit, said analog circuit having an analog circuit input electrically coupled to said network input node;

10   (4) said analog circuit having an input mode of operation for receiving an input signal at said analog circuit input and an output mode of operation for producing an output signal at said analog circuit input;

(5) said output of said digital circuit being applied to

15   said network input node when said digital circuit is in a non-high-impedance state; and

(6) said output signal of said analog circuit being applied to said network input node when said digital circuit is in a high-impedance state.

20

15.   The simulator of claim 14 in which said output signal of said analog circuit is operably coupled to a plurality of digital circuit outputs using a bus.

16.   The simulator of claim 14 wherein said input mode and output mode are selected automatically and dynamically according to the state of said digital circuit.

5

17.   A method of simulating mixed analog/digital systems, comprising:

transforming an input of an analog circuit into an ioput, said ioput having a conditional output feeding back to a bus, said ioput being operable under a high-impedance input state, and said ioput capable of accepting a digital signal input and producing an analog signal output;

electrically coupling said ioput to a digital circuit output and to inputs of a plurality of additional circuits;

receiving said digital signal input at said ioput when said digital circuit output is in a non-high-impedance state; and

applying said analog signal output at said ioput when said digital circuit output is in a high-impedance state.

20

18.   The method of claim 17 in which said step of electrically coupling comprises coupling said ioput to a plurality of digital circuit outputs using a bus.

ABSTRACT

A system and method for simulating the electrical operation

of a mixed analog/digital system includes the capability for

5   analog circuit block inputs to respond to the condition in which

digital gate outputs connected to the analog circuit block input

are presented in high-impedance or floating signal states,

thereby providing for simulation of a wide variety of mixed

analog/digital designs in which this condition occurs. In a

10   simulated design, an analog input of one or more analog circuit

blocks is transformed into an analog tri-statable input-output

referred to as an ioput. The ioput is capable of driving an

analog signal when the digital gate outputs connected to the

analog block input are presented in a high-impedance Z state;

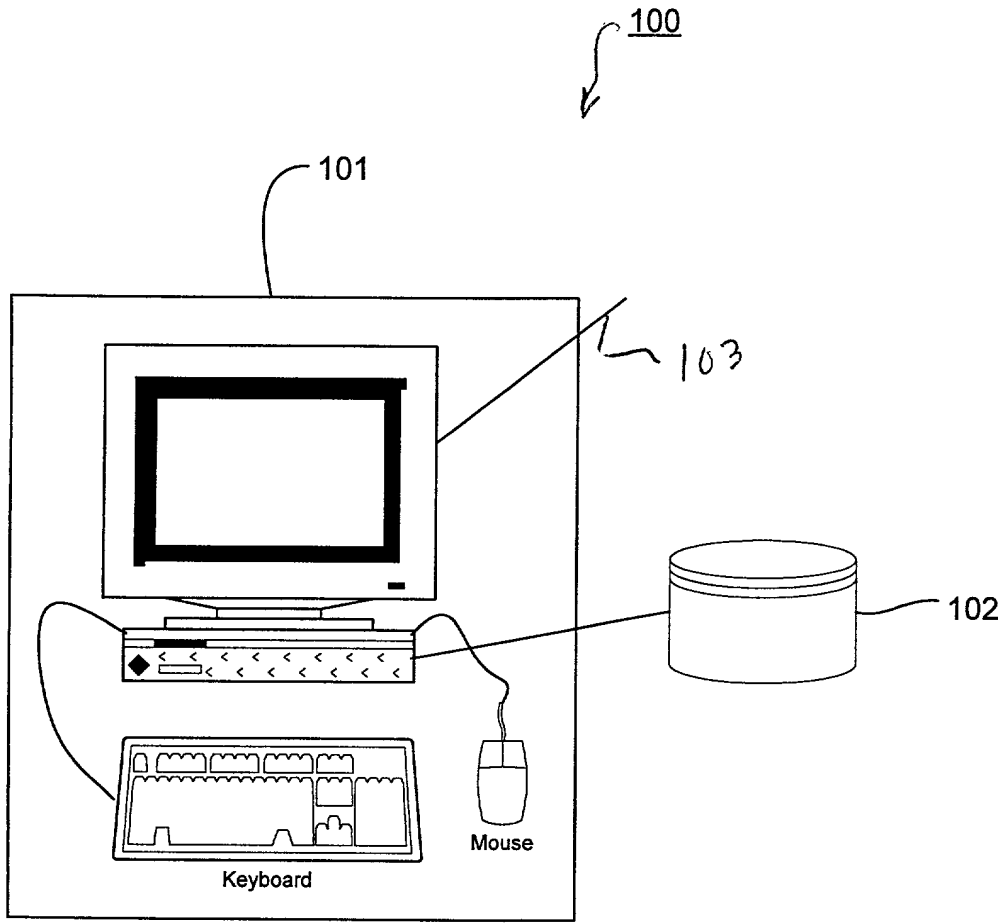15   otherwise, the ioput acts as an analog input to the analog
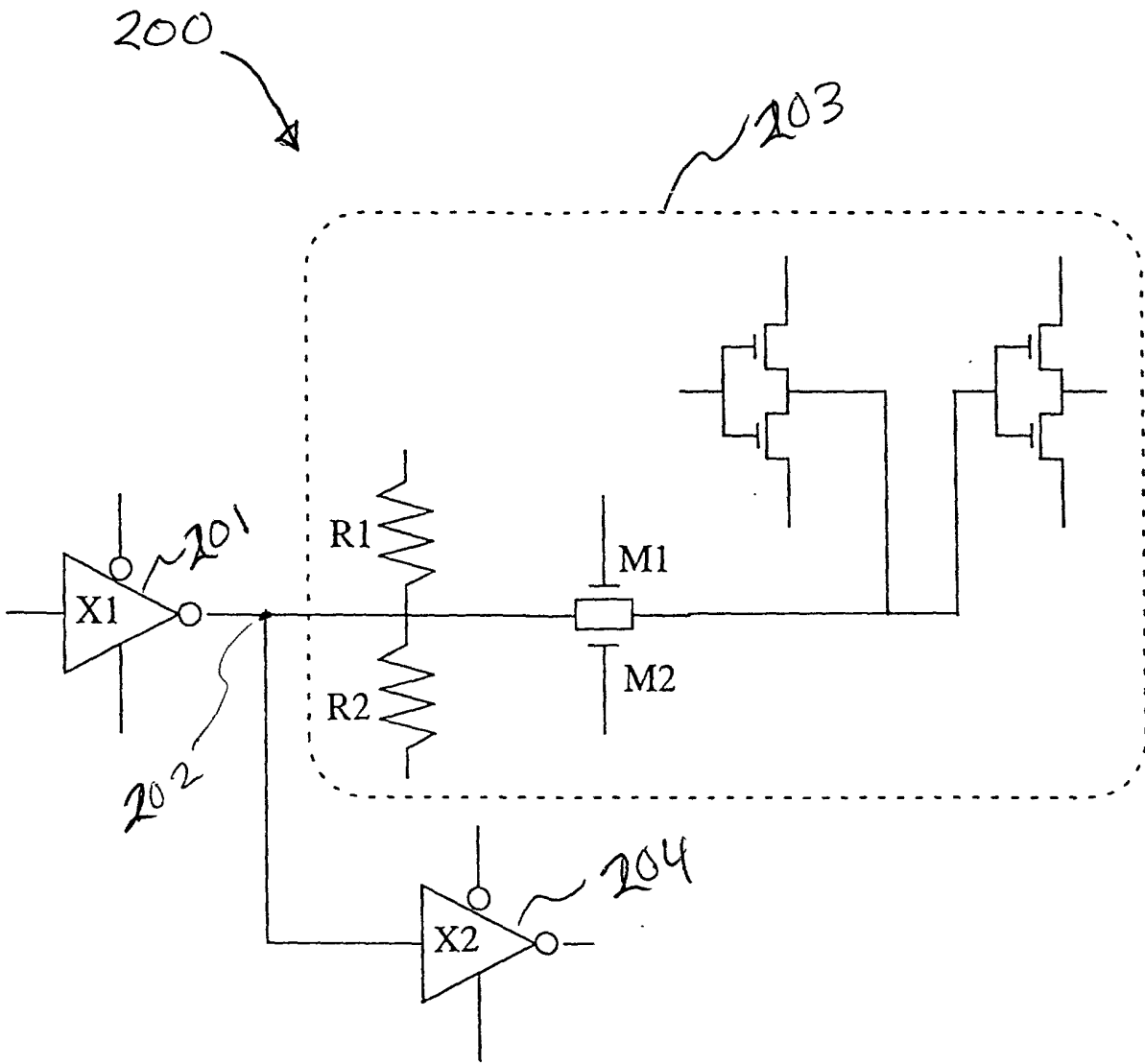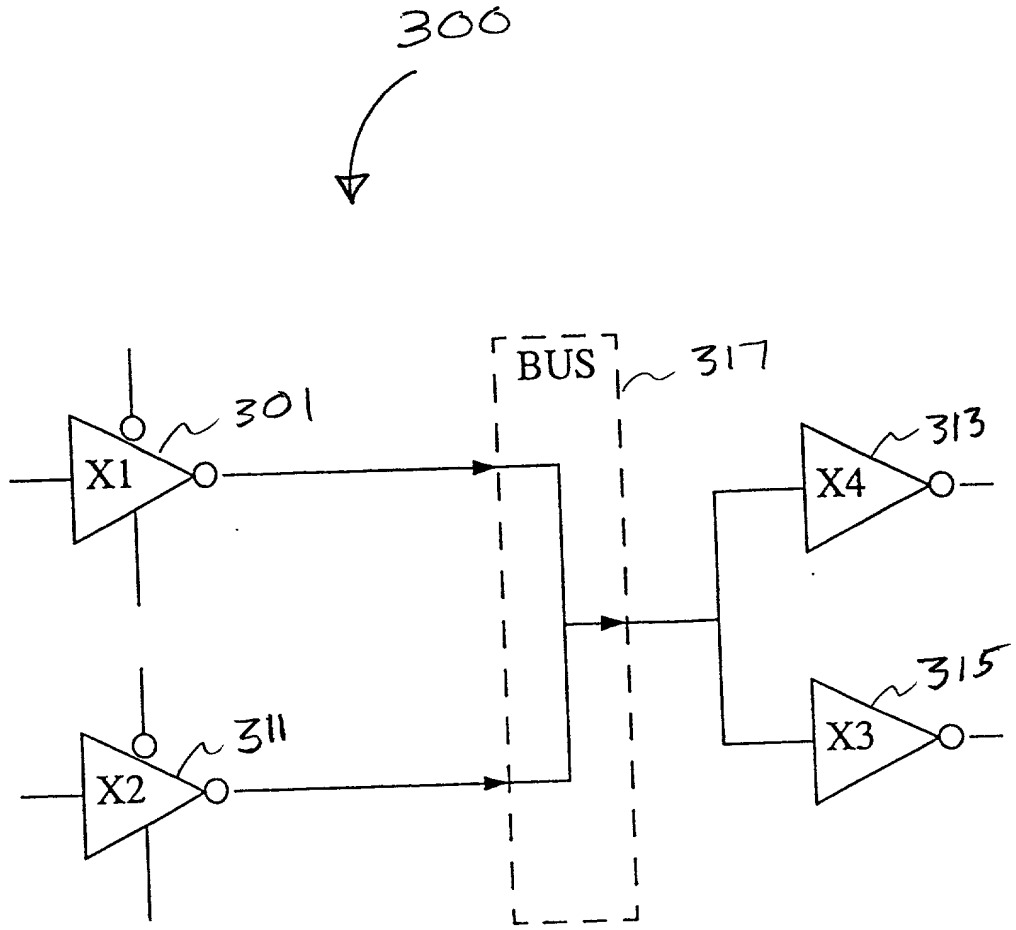
circuit block.

20

FIGURE 1

200

203

R1

R2

M1

M2

X1 201

202

X2 204

FIG. 2

FIG. 3

400

BUS ~417

X1 401

X2 411

X4 413

X3 415

402

B

403

451

R1

M1

M2

452

450

analog tri-state ioput

R2

B'

(Z unless B is Z)

FIG. 4